



Western Forestry Leadership Coalition Fiscal Year 2018 USDA Forest Service Budget Highlights

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This document provides information to Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) members on the recently-released USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) fiscal year (FY) 2018 President's Budget proposal. This update will be posted on the WFLC webpage at: <https://www.thewflc.org/resources>. Additionally, the WFLC summary table of Forest Service programs has been updated to include FY 2018 budget information. That table can be found on the same webpage.

For more information on these budget and forestry issues, please contact Kelsey Delaney. Please note that this update does not include an exhaustive list of Forest Service programs nor does it represent all the programs that WFLC is tracking relative to the federal budgeting process. Updates to this information will be shared with WFLC members.

Budget Summary

In March 2017, the Trump Administration released the President's first budget proposal titled, "America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again." This FY 2018 federal budget blueprint provided high level details for major agencies and the President's priorities regarding FY 2018 spending. The blueprint calls for a \$54 billion-dollar increase in defense spending in FY 2018 that is offset by a \$54 billion-dollar reduction to non-defense discretionary programs.

President Trump released the expanded budget for FY 2018 in late May 2017, including the proposed budget for the Forest Service of \$4.73 billion in discretionary appropriations. The Forest Service Budget Justification is posted at: <https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/usfs-fy18-budget-justification.pdf>. Additionally, the Forest Service FY 2018 Budget Overview is found here: <https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/usfs-fy18-budget-overview.pdf>. Below you will find highlights and analysis of various Forest Service programs. Note that all increases/decreases to programs are based upon differences to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (omnibus) ([P.L. 115-31](#)).

State and Private Forestry

Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs (S&PF) budget request is \$118.01 million, down from \$216.92 million in the FY 2017 omnibus (an approximate \$98.91 million decrease). Most programs within S&PF have proposed reductions. The budget justification notes that the FY 2018 requests adjusts the role of the federal government within the coordinated S&PF effort.

Notable changes include (please note that these are all proposals):

- The Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) program, the Forest Legacy Program (FLP), Community Forest and Open Space Conservation program, and the Urban and Community Forestry program would not receive

funding. The budget indicates that the agency's focus will be on the maintenance of the existing National Forest System (NFS) lands.

- A decrease of \$1.3 million for the Forest Health Management – Federal Lands account is proposed with the reduction towards international projects, and survey and technical assistance. The focus of this program will be on the most pressing forest restoration needs and to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities.
- A \$2.82 million decrease is proposed for Forest Health Management – Cooperative Lands, with a program that will focus on pests and pathogens on state and private lands that threaten nearby national forests and grasslands.
- A slight increase of \$464,000 is proposed for the Forest Stewardship Program, with a program focus on providing assistance to private landowners to manage their forest lands. The budget notes that better management of private lands supports the nearby maintenance of national forest and grasslands and provides economic benefits.

Forest and Rangeland Research

The Forest Service budget proposes \$259 million for Forest and Rangeland Research, a decrease of \$29.51 million from the FY 2017 omnibus. Highlights include:

- The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program is funded at \$77 million, level with the FY 2017 omnibus. This allows for a 10-year measurement cycle in the West and full implementation of FIA sampling in interior Alaska.
- The Research and Development programs are proposed for funding at \$182 million, a decrease of \$29.51 million. The budget proposes to focus on research that supports the management of NFS and wildland fire suppression efforts.

National Forest System

The NFS budget request is \$1,747.44 billion, an increase of \$234.12 million from the FY 2017 omnibus. This increase is due to the transfer of the Hazardous Fuels program from Wildland Fire Management to the NFS. Highlights include:

- The budget proposes no funding for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), a decrease of \$40 million. The budget proposal states that eliminating the CFLRP program will reduce duplication with other federal programs.
- A decrease of \$8.68 million is proposed for the Forest Products budget line item (BLI).
- \$162 million is available to continue the Integrated Resource Restoration pilots in R1, R3, and R4.
- The Hazardous Fuels account is shifted to NFS and funded at \$354.29 million, a decrease of \$35.71 million. The budget proposes to move this program to NFS because most hazardous fuels work takes place on NFS lands. Additionally, the budget states that this move would allow the agency to more efficiently administer the program.
- The budget proposes to continue the Land Management Planning, Assessment & Monitoring account that combines the previous Land Management Planning, and Inventory and Monitoring BLIs. Funding is decreased by \$17.93 million. Congress approved this combined BLI in the FY 2017 omnibus.

Wildland Fire Management

The Forest Service budget proposes to fund the Wildland Fire Management account at \$2,495.04 billion, a decrease of \$338.38 million from the FY 2017 omnibus (this does not include the \$342 million of emergency funds in the FY 2017 omnibus). This decrease is due to the shifting of Hazardous Fuels to NFS along with

decreases to programs including State Fire Assistance (SFA), Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) and the Joint Fire Science Program. Highlights include:

- As mentioned above, the budget proposes to shift the Hazardous Fuels program from the Wildland Fire Management program to NFS.
- The budget proposes funding wildfire suppression at \$1,056.82 billion; the current estimate of the 10-year rolling average for wildfire suppression costs. The budget proposes to move all base 8 costs from the Suppression account to the Preparedness account. This constituted a need to re-base the 10-year average for suppression, resulting in part to the reduction of the 10-year average from FY 2017. Base 8 is described as the first eight hours per day worked by a firefighter.
- A decrease of \$8.6 million to the SFA program, down from \$78 million.
- A decrease of \$3.4 million to VFA, down from \$15 million.
- The budget does not fund the FLAME Wildfire Suppression Reserve Fund. The budget proposal states that there are inefficiencies in the operations between the FLAME account and the Suppression account. By not proposing funding for the FLAME account and by fully funding the Suppression account, the budget says that the Forest Service will maximize operational and administrative efficiencies.

Other Budget Highlights

- The budget proposes \$99.70 million for Capital Improvement and Maintenance, a decrease of \$248.32 million from FY 2017 omnibus levels. There are significant decreases in the BLIs within Capital Improvement and Maintenance. Legacy Roads and Trails and Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure Improvement would not receive funding.
- The budget proposes to fund Land Acquisition at \$7 million, a decrease of \$47.42 million from FY 2017 omnibus levels. The \$7 million is to maintain staff and carryout current land acquisition transactions. The budget proposes no new land acquisition projects for FY 2018.